

Summary Statistics of Youth Health-Risk Behaviors and Comparison Summary of Health-Risk Behaviors of Males and Females, Grades 9-12 (Youth Risk Behavior Survey – United States, 2003)

Introduction

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) monitors six categories of priority health-risk behaviors among youth and young adults. These behaviors contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors (that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection); unhealthy dietary behaviors; and physical inactivity – plus overweight. The YRBSS includes a national school-based survey conducted by CDC as well as state, territorial, and local school-based surveys conducted by education and health agencies. This report summarizes results from the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), conducted among students in grades 9–12 during February–May 2003.

Summary Statistics of Youth Health-Risk Behaviors, 2003

In the United States, 71% of all deaths among persons aged 10–24 years result from only four causes: motor-vehicle crashes, other unintentional injuries, homicide, and suicide. Results from the 2003 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey demonstrated that numerous high school students engage in behaviors that increase their likelihood of death from these four causes. Examples include:

- 18.2% had rarely or never worn a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else
- 30.2% had ridden with a driver who had been drinking alcohol during the 30 days preceding the survey
- 17.1% had carried a weapon during the 30 days preceding the survey
- 44.9% had drunk alcohol during the 30 days preceding the survey
- 22.4% had used marijuana during the 30 days preceding the survey
- 8.5% had attempted suicide during the 12 months preceding the survey

Substantial morbidity and social problems among young persons also result from unintended pregnancies and STDs, including HIV infection. In 2003, 46.7% of high school students had ever had sexual intercourse; 37.0% of currently sexually active students (had sex during the 3 months preceding the survey) had not used a condom at last sexual intercourse; and 3.2% had ever injected an illegal drug.

Sixty-three percent of all deaths among persons aged ≥ 25 years result from only two causes: cardiovascular disease and cancer. The majority of risk behaviors associated with these two causes of death are initiated during adolescence. In 2003, 21.9% of high school students had smoked cigarettes during the 30 days preceding the survey; 78.0% had not eaten ≥ 5 servings per day of fruits and vegetables during the 7 days preceding the survey; 33.4% had participated in an insufficient amount of physical activity; and 12.1% were overweight.

Summary Statistics of Youth Health-Risk Behaviors, 1991-2003

Injuries and Violence

During 1991–2003, significant decreases occurred in the percentage of students who:

- had never or rarely worn seatbelts (25.9%–18.2%)
- rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol (39.9%–30.2%)
- had been in a physical fight (42.5%–33.0%)
- had made a suicide plan (18.6%–16.5%)

Tobacco Use

The percentage of students who ever tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs:

- remained constant from 1991–1999 (70.1%–70.4%)
- decreased significantly from 1999–2003 (70.4%–58.4%)

The percentage of students who reported current cigarette use:

- increased significantly from 1991–1997 (27.5%–36.4%)
- decreased significantly from 1997–2003 (36.4%–21.9%)

Alcohol and Other Drug Use

The percentage of students who reported lifetime alcohol use:

- decreased significantly from 1991–2003 (81.6%–74.9%)

The percentage of students who reported lifetime and current marijuana use:

- increased significantly from 1991–1997 (31.3%–47.1% and 14.7%–26.2%, respectively)
- decreased significantly from 1997–2003 (47.1%–40.2% and 26.2%–22.4%, respectively)

Sexual Behaviors

During 1991–2003, significant decreases occurred in the percentage of students who:

- ever had sexual intercourse (54.1%–46.7%)
- had ≥ 4 sex partners during their life (18.7%–14.4%)

During 1991–2003, significant increases occurred in the percentage of currently sexually active students who:

- used a condom at last sexual intercourse (46.2%–63.0%)

Physical Activity

The percentage of students who attended physical education (PE) class daily:

- decreased significantly from 1991–1995 (41.6%–25.4%)
- leveled off from 1995–2003 (25.4%–28.4%)

Comparison Summary of Health-Risk Behaviors of Males and Females, Grades 9-12, 2003

Health-Risk Behavior	Males (%)	Females (%)
Behaviors that Contribute to Unintentional Injuries		
Rarely or never wore seat belts when riding in a car driven by someone else	21.5	14.6
Rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol (grade 11) ¹	30.3	30.7
Drove a car or other vehicle ≥ 1 times after drinking alcohol ¹	15.0	8.9
Behaviors that Contribute to Violence		
Carried a weapon (e.g., a gun, knife, or club) on ≥ 1 days ¹	26.9	6.7
Carried a weapon on school property on ≥ 1 day ¹	8.9	3.1
Been in a physical fight ≥ 1 times ²	40.5	25.1
Forced sexual intercourse	6.1	11.9
Felt sad or hopeless almost every day for ≥ 2 weeks ²	21.9	35.5
Had seriously considered attempting suicide ²	12.8	21.3
Had made a suicide plan ²	14.1	18.9
Had attempted suicide ≥ 1 times ²	5.4	11.5
Tobacco and Other Drug Use		
Had ever tried cigarette smoking (even one or two puffs)	58.7	58.1
Currently smoke cigarettes ¹	21.8	21.9
Ever used marijuana	42.7	37.6
Sexual Behaviors that Contribute to Unintended Pregnancy & STDs		
Sexual intercourse during their lifetime	48.0	45.3
Initiated sexual intercourse before age 13 years	10.4	4.2
Sexual intercourse during their lifetime with four or more sex partners	17.5	11.2
Used a condom during last sexual intercourse ³	68.8	57.4
Used birth control pills before last sexual intercourse ³	13.1	20.6
Dietary Behaviors and Physical Activity		
At risk for becoming overweight ⁴	15.2	14.4
Overweight ⁵	15.7	8.3
Trying to lose weight ¹	29.1	59.3
Ate five or more servings per day of fruits and vegetables ⁶	23.6	20.3
Drank three or more glasses per day of milk ⁶	22.7	11.2
Exercised to lose weight or avoid gaining weight ¹	49.0	65.7
Went without eating for 24 or more hours to lose weight or avoid gaining weight ¹	8.5	18.3
Took diet pills, powders, or liquids without a doctor's advice to lose weight or avoid gaining weight ¹	7.1	11.3
Vomited or took laxatives to lose weight or avoid gaining weight ¹	3.7	8.4
Participated in vigorous physical activity ⁶	70.0	55.0
Participated in moderate physical activity ⁶	27.2	22.1
Participated in insufficient amount of physical activity ⁶	26.9	40.1
Played on sports teams ²	64.0	51.0
Watched television for three or more hours per day	39.3	37.0

¹ During the 30 days preceding the survey

² During the 12 months preceding the survey

³ Of students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months

⁴ Students who were at or above the 85th percentile but below the 95th percentile for body mass index by age and sex based on reference data

⁵ Students who were at or above the 95th percentile for body mass index by age and sex based on reference data

⁶ During the 7 days preceding the survey